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ABSTRACT

This qualitative account of a magnet school, California's Ibsen School (grades 4-12), addresses teachers' professional identities and the shaping of them. In most high schools, teachers' professional identities are shaped by subject cultures. At Ibsen, a schoolwide community has developed because of its mission and in the leadership of its principal. Characteristics of the principal are described. This case study of Ibsen School illustrates impediments to a schoolwide professional community of secondary school teachers presented by conventional norms of teaching. Described is Ibsen's mission and policy context, its constitutional structure and resources, and indicators of its educational success. The next section highlights the professional roles that distinguish Ibsen teachers' worklives from those of their colleagues elsewhere. The features identified appear most fundamental to the school's success--student-teacher collaboration, personalization, and collective problem-solving. The third section addresses the issue of how each of these distinctive features of Ibsen's community is organized. Finally the cultural themes of Ibsen's community are revisited to highlight the mandates for school leadership presented by such school professional conflicts. (15 references) (RR)

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CONSTRUCTING A SCHOOL-WIDE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY: THE NEGOTIATED ORDER OF A PERFORMING ARTS SCHOOL

Joan E. Talbert

INTRODUCTION

In most high schools, teachers' professional identities are shaped by subject cultures -- within which special standards and routines of good practice are defined and between which status and resources are allocated -- and teacher communities are forged, more or less, within subject area enclaves (Little, in this volume; McLaughlin, in this volume). A school-wide community of secondary teachers is rare indeed (Talbert, 1991; Talbert, Eaton, Ennis, Fletcher and Tsai, 1990). Against the backdrop of our research in typical high schools, the strong school community we found at Ibsen -- a performing arts magnet school highly successful with its diverse student body --is in striking contrast to the norm.

The school's power to engage its teachers and students is rooted in its special mission and in the leadership of the person who has been principal of the school since it's founding in 1978. On one hand, the school's mission to develop excellence in the performing arts, as well as in academics, generates strong commitment among the staff and families who share this vision of education. On the other hand, Beattrice Bronson (our pseudonym for Ibsen's principal), engenders commitment to the school's distinctive community among the academic faculty and the students marginal to its program and culture. Ms. Bronson challenges conventional norms for education and teaching that interfer with the school's program success and its broader mission of supporting the personal growth of each student; at the same time, she works with students and staff to reconstruct relations that engage and empower all members of the school community. In many ways, Beattrice fits the definition of a transformational leader, who "...facilitates the redefinition of a people's mission and vision, a renewal of their commitment, and the restructuring of their systems for goal accomplishment" (Roberts, 1985, quoted in Leithwood, 1992). For most academic teachers at Ibsen, the school context effectively challenges taken-for-granted assumptions of teaching practice and professional relationships that shape teachers' community in traditional school settings. At the same time, it constructs new professional roles and norms that serve the school's mission.

This case study of Ibsen illustrates impediments to a school-wide professional community of secondary school teachers presented by conventional norms of teaching. I describe what Ibsen's mission means for day-to-day relations among students and

adults and consider ways in which these patterns depart form traditional professional roles and identities of the academic teachers. The tensions between Ibsen's community and the broader culture of high school teaching pose a fundamental challenge for school leadership. The kinds of problems which engage the school staff and recur periodically are rooted in uncertainties and tensions entailed in displacing sacred norms of practice such as teacher-controlled pedagogy and grading curves which produce student failures. The case shows that a school community can set new parameters for teachers' professional identity and community with the dedication and leadership skills of the principal and a nucleus of committed faculty and staff members.

The first section describes the school's special mission and policy context, its institutional structure and resources, and indicators of educational success. The next section highlights the professional roles that distinguish Ibsen teachers' worklives from those of their colleagues elsewhere and that appear most fundamental to the school's success -- student-teacher collaboration, personalization, and collective problem-solving.

The third section addresses the issue of how each of these distinctive features of Ibsen's community is organized -- what is the glue of this school-wide community? Drawing upon interviews with teachers who had recently entered the school and with teacher leaders in the school, I point to conflicts between Ibsen's culture and traditional norms for secondary school teaching and illustrate ways in which the principal mediates the tensions and empowers teachers. Teachers are engaged in constructing and maintaining the school community through ongoing processes of collective problem-solving and through the professional transformations entailed in academic teachers' acculturation to the Ibsen community.

Finally, I revisit cultural themes of the Ibsen community in order to highlight the mandates for school leadership presented by such school-profession conflicts. I emphasize the critical role played by Ms. Bronson as mediator between conventional teaching cultures and school norms essential to Ibsen's success. The new order of Ibsen school's professional community goes against strong grains of the multiple, embedded contexts of secondary school teaching and, as such, is vulnerable and needing to be constantly negotiated and enforced.

IBSEN SCHOOL: UNIQUE BUT NOT BOUTIQUE

Until recently, with the expansion of school choice programs throughout the nation, Ibsen was among a handful of performing arts schools in the country. Unlike most of its counterparts, however, it does not audition students for admission on the basis of performing arts talents; rather, Ibsen applicants are admitted according to a district formula to achieve racial and ethnic

balance.

Another unusual feature is the school's 4-12 grade structure, a model adopted from an east coast performing arts magnet to assure program continutity. This grade structure means that, while Ibsen's size of 1400 is comparable to that of the typical secondary school, its enrollment at the 10-12 grade level is only about 400 students.

In its large urban district, Ibsen is one of ten magnet secondary schools. The school draws students from seventeen neighborhoods in the city and has a waiting list of about 2000 minority and majority applicants. Until 1990-91 Ibsen was located in a predominantly African American neighborhood, and the school has the second largest African American student enrollment in the city (with 34% African American students, compared to 9% Hispanic, 4% Filipino, 2% Asian and 50% Caucasian students). The school's relocation to a Southeast Asian community three miles from the former school site means that the ethnic composition of Ibsen's waiting list is shifting to include applications from the new neighborhood.

Most distinctive is Ibsen's profile of success -- not just among schools for at-risk youngsters but among affluent schools in the same district. Ibsen has the lowest drop-out rate for its high school students in the district, even compared with the most upper-middle class schools across town. Further, 87% of the most recent graduating cohort went on to college, and about two-thirds of the graduates to 4-year colleges. All students perform above the district norms on proficiency tests and at norm on criterion-based tests. Data on 12th grade students' performance on the California Assessment Program tests in reading and math place Ibsen well above the district high school average in reading and near the average in math. Ibsen ranked 5th in reading among the 20 district high schools; 3rd among the 10 "special" high schools. In math, Ibsen ranked 11th among all district schools and 3rd among the 10 magnet high schools.

While the school occupies a special niche in the district system, its success cannot be attributed to special resources. Ibsen's funding level of $3,100 per student (in 1990-91), which includes magnet funds of $700,000 per year, is below the mean of just over $3,200 for district high schools. Out of the 20 district high schools, Ibsen ranks 14th on fiscal resources, in spite of the additional costs incurred in staffing and running the performing arts program. Compared to the other magnet high schools, Ibsen ranks 9th out of 10 on funding level.

Even in recruiting teachers, Ibsen has no advantage presently over other schools in the district. While the initial faculty was self-selected and thus interested in the school's special mission, new Ibsen teachers are assigned from the

district pool. Given large differences in the faculty turnover rates among subjects, there are large subject differences in proportions of teachers who chose the school. Our data indicate that most current math and science teachers at the high school level have been assigned to the school by the district, given substantial staff turnover in these subjects over the years.

TEACHING AT IBSEN: ENABLING STUDENT SUCCESS

The settings in which Ibsen teachers and students interact set contexts for professional roles in the school; they include academic classes, performing arts classes and out-of-class preparations for performances. While performing arts classes are officially extracurricular and thus elective, most Ibsen students take at least one performing arts class each day. The performing arts subjects offered at Ibsen include dance, drama or theater, vocal music, instrumental music, visual arts (the five core performing arts subjects) and, in addition, technical theater and television production. Dance has been the most popular field among students and has the largest faculty. The technical theater area is a program innovation (started some years after the school's founding by an elementary school teacher who was also a contractor and knew how to read blueprints), which enables Ibsen students to take the full range of responsibilities for putting on major productions.

The four major musical productions each year -- as well as regularly scheduled theater, dance and chorus productions put on by classes at the school and in the community -- represent important out-of-classroom contexts of students' and many teachers' worklives. Other, more typical outside contexts for student-adult relationships are much less inclusive in terms of numbers or time spent: clubs, such as academic decathalon; a tutoring center; peer counselling and support groups that have emerged in recent years; and the open-door offices of main office staff and administrators (key actors for students include the counselling staff, an attendance officer and the principal).

The dynamics of adult-student relationships at Ibsen are different in some important ways from those typical in public schools in the same and other districts. I highlight those that seem most critical in defining nontraditional roles for teachers that support students' educational success.

Collaboration Between Adults and Students

Collaboration between Ibsen teachers and students can be seen most dramatically in the performing arts classes. The nature of interactions among teachers and students reveals the collaborative nature of their enterprise: teacher is coach, guide and giver of sometimes-harsh feedback; student is apprentice;

peers are mirrors, props, advisors and coworkers. They work together at the conceptual level and at the technique or skill level, so that everyone understands what they're doing and why and are able to do it. Ibsen students are learning much more than how to dance or sing or act; they are learning the logic of choreography or harmony or theater. Further, in the context of performance demands, the apprentice role of student and collaboration among students and teachers is real: all share an interest in the quality of their collective product. The individual and team work extends beyond the classroom to practicing parts and arranging ways to transport themselves and materials to performance sites.

The collaborative roles one finds in the academic classes derive largely from contingencies and norms established by the performing arts program. Classroom teaching is quite conventional, on the whole, given constraints posed by mandated texts and individual testing programs. However, an important kind of collaboration is established by contractual agreements that students and teachers must make to accommodate "pull-outs" regularly generated by rehearsals for major school productions. The large number of high school students who participate in these productions must arrange to master course material they "miss" in class. This kind of arrangement shifts conceptions of education away from the idea of teaching as transmitting information toward the idea that of learning as seeking knowledge and skills. It prompts teachers to see students as independent learners and to relax control over the sequence and substance of teaching experiences.

Students' experiences working with teachers in their performing arts classes and on productions also frames relations in academic classes. The students import the collaborative norms and roles into the domain of academic classes, treating both peers and teachers as resources and advisors. They are much less likely to enact the traditional student role of deferring to the teacher and working dilegently alone, and so the academic teachers are themselves caste into more collaborative teaching roles. As a social studies teacher commented, while explaining how academic teachers need to cut back on course demands so that the students don't "burn out" while trying to balance demands from the arts and academics: "Our school attracts vocal, demonstrative kids who wouldn't do their homework anyway." As the comment illustrates, Ibsen students play a strong role in setting norms for their relations with academic teachers.

Teachers' perceptions of students' special talents and needs also set the stage for collaboration between academic teachers and students in constructing subject knowledge. At Ibsen, teachers aim to connect kids and content. The school culture defines the students as artistic (in spite of the fact that they are not screened on the basis of such talents) and, given this

view, teachers try hard to adapt instruction to meet their special talents and interests. They use spatial representations of ideas, incorporate art work into their curricula, select supplementary texts and materials that are meaningful to performing artists. An English teacher, for example, selected James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist As A Young Man for her seniors last year because it would have special meaning to them; she had them draw and write about the personal meanings of the novel. The widespread efforts to connect subjects to students' interests sends them a strong message: "you kids are special and I will work with you to make meaning of this subject matter."

Outside the classroom, the four major school productions each year are a central arena for collaboration among Ibsen students and adults. All students in the school are tried out for the performing roles in each production, a policy implemented in recent years to guard against overlooking shy, talented students. Large portions get one or another role to play: as leads, as supporting actors, as dance or chorus ensemble members, or as part of a vaste stage crew that makes props and runs the technical and mechanical operations back-stage. Approximately half of the high school students are involved in a major production each year. A large proportion of Ibsen students thus experience the intense collaboration with peers and adults entailed in a major school production.

Personalization

The school's collaborative teaching and learning roles are central to the special affective relationships that develop between Ibsen students and adults. Classroom life, and its spill-overs into performances and academic tutoring, provide strong evidence to students that their teachers are trustworthy and helpful people. Likewise, teachers at Ibsen express a kind of trust in students -- as honorable and capable human beings -- that is all-too rare among teachers in traditional high schools.

The arena of major productions brings Ibsen students into even closer relationships with their performing arts teachers and with academic teachers who give significant amounts of time to productions, on a semi-voluntary rotating basis. In this context, the boundaries of course curricula and student-teacher roles breaks down and the youth share back-stage rapport with adults whom they get to know better as "real people." The daily experiences of working together on a common product allow people to develop mutual respect and trust. The major productions play a very special role in creating a personal school environment, in which students and teachers alike come to be known in a wide range of roles, as whole people. They also provide occasions for students and staff to celebrate their common enterprise, to recognize individuals' talents and hard work, and to present the school's self to the outside community. The students see how their personal relations with Ibsen teachers can be translated

into something valued outside school boundaries.

However, not all Ibsen students excel in, or are interested in, the performing arts. These individuals could well become increasingly marginal and fall through the cracks of school life, as so often happens among least-engaged students in traditional high schools. Not so at Ibsen. Both teachers and administrators alike talk as much or more about the kids who are at risk than they talk about the successes. In itself this is not unusual, since people in all CRC schools worry or complain about the kids they are loosing, but the way Ibsen adults talk about these students is different. Rather than being seen and treated as part of a category and ultimately as a dropout statistic, the marginal kids are known as individuals with names and families that teachers and administrators know and work with to define problems and solutions. We have found that high school cultures differ radically in how they deal with the inevitable facts that not all students integrated easily into school life and that most students will sometimes have personal problems they need help with. The personal, supportive environment for students at Ibsen is rare among public schools this size and is maintained by professional roles expanded to include caring for individual students.

Collective problem solving

Ibsen's support system truly challenges students to fall between the cracks. The students have learned to take responsibility for each other and to seek adult support in working through problems.

Interviews with Ibsen administrators and staff are filled with stories of how they are helping students solve problems -- to form a support group for drug abuse and to explore community resources, to get rid of a police officer who is about to arrest Ibsen's resident punker for having a knife can-opener, to help a student cope with a history of child abuse. The bottom line for successful problem-solving between Ibsen adults and students is trust -- trust which evolves through collaboration and personal relations between youth and adults in the school.

A success story Beattrice likes to tell illustrates both what she takes to be important at Ibsen and the way problem-solving relationships are socially constructed between students and adults. The story begins with the drug bust of a few Ibsen students early in the school year. It was the students who defined a "drug problem" in the school for the administration. And it was they who were to decide what a first step could be and what adults they would like to help; the students formed a drug support group that included the principal and attendance officer. The adults offered suggestions on how they might research local resources and made contact with a former alumna of the school and

ex-addict, who volunteered to be a facilitator for the group. Soon after, a few parents approached the administration wanting help to start up their own support group. Both groups are still going strong, after three years. The latest chapter of the story suggests that strong peer norms have emerged to control drug use among Ibsen students: a group member came to a meeting high on drugs and his peers asked him to leave, expressing their deep disappointment that he had so little respect for their mutual trust. Recounting the incident, Beattrice commented, smiling, that the adults could never have played that role successfully.

In sum, Ibsen is a special place for students -- where adults are collaborators, where each individual counts, where problems can be made managable. This is the crux of Ibsen's dramatic success with adolescents, including those who are educationally at-risk. Ibsen is also a special, demanding place for teachers -- where professional roles well exceed routine classroom teaching, where student failure is not allowed, where faculty cannot hide problems. A critical role of site leadership and teachers' professional community in the school is enabling teachers to succeed in this demanding school context.

ORGANIZING IBSEN: ENABLING TEACHERS' SUCCESS

When one looks closely at the professional roles and resources that go into constructing the school's special culture, Ibsen's success story becomes a legend of leadership and professional transformation among the academic teachers. The school community could not have evolved within normal definitions of teacher's roles, of school principalship, and of staff support. In fact, most everyone at Ibsen works well beyond the boundaries of their contractual and normal, or typical, professional roles. Beattrice, and other school leaders she has nurtured, succeed in transforming the ground of teachers' identities, roles and collegiality and in engaging and sustaining their commitments to the Ibsen community.

My analysis of Ibsen as an organization highlights those features of school culture and structure important to the social construction of student-adult relationships and thus to teachers' special roles and collegial relations. I pose two problems for analysis:

- What school norms and structures support collaborative relations, personalization, and collective problem-solving among youngsters and adults?; and

- How are tensions between Ibsen's school community and broader professional environments of high school teaching managed so that the school can thrive?

This analysis considers mainly the academic teachers of secondary-level classes, whose jobs differ substantively from those of their colleagues in traditional high schools. The role demands engendered by the performing arts program and norms for student-teacher relations require that experienced, or well-socialized new, academic teachers make significant adaptations to fit into the Ibsen school community. The tensions between Ibsen school culture and traditional teaching culture must be resolved, one way or the other, by teachers who come to work at the school. Some never adapt to Ibsen's professional community and leave the school; others accommodate and recognize trade-offs between the worlds of school and profession; most come to define their professional identity and sense of community in relation to the school. The norms and dynamics of the school's professional community, and the principal's key role in defining and modelling them, are critical in sustaining teachers' commitment to the school and enabling their success.

Supports for Collaboration

Demands on academic teachers to collaborate with the students in their classes and the arts faculty who pull the students out for rehearsals, is based in the authority of performing arts in Ibsen and in its special professional culture. This situation can be quite threatening to academic teachers. For one, the normal status hierarchy among school subjects is turned on its head; it is the requirements and authority of the performing arts, rather than academics, that take precedence at Ibsen (see Little, in this volume). Also, the traditional latitude that teachers have to pursue their individual priorities is challenged by the need to accommodate demands of the arts program. And further, the expectations for collaborating with students challenges the traditional conception of teacher-student relations as hierarchical.

Teachers new to the school, particularly in math and science, complain bitterly about the disruptions to normal education caused by the performing arts and the constraints they impose on their instructional success. Others, less threatened by school norms, emphasize how important it is that teachers at Ibsen are adaptable. As one teacher commented: "You have to be very flexible...committed and more prepared. The [school's] purpose is not what it is in other schools." Those who survive and thrive at the school have learned to entrust students with responsiblity to master course material and to use school resources like the tutoring center.

Subject matter or disciplinary norms appear to play a strong role in how far academic teachers go in adapting to the collaboration norm. Math teachers, and to a lesser extent science teachers, feel compelled to control the sequence and pace of instruction so as to cover in orderly fashion the district

curriculum. As a math/science teacher commented: "In math there are definite skills you want to get across, science too but not so much. There are abstract concepts...you want them to keep up." Teachers throughout the school community acknowledge the special plight of math teachers in the school. An English teacher explained to us that: "Math and language teachers have a hard time so we lose alot. They build upon concepts. For them it's very difficult to maintain continuity of learning [given the need to accommodate students' participation in major productions]."

Another institutionalized rule that collides with Ibsen's norm of collaborating with students is the conception of teachers' relationships with students as hierarchical. In traditional frame, teachers' sense of professionalism requires that they exercise authority in their relations with students, that students defer to them and their requests, and that administators enforce this norm of relations. A number of teachers new to Ibsen complained to us that they didn't feel the principal backed up their authority with the students.

In general, the academic teachers at Ibsen are working against strong professional currents; they can easily feel that they are falling short of standards and that their own values and worth are undermined by school conditions and norms. An Ibsen math/science teacher once commented that being at Ibsen helped her to understand what the arts teachers felt like at a regular high school. She said she felt like "a one-eyed step child," only tolerated in the school. A big problem for academic teachers at Ibsen is the loss of professional worth they experience -- a loss due to the flip or reversal of their usual status in the hierarchy of high school subjects and loss due to the low esteem they are accorded by their subject colleagues who regard Ibsen's program as inferior. For example, in interviews with teachers and principals in other district high schools we have heard comments such as "there <u>are</u> no science teachers at Ibsen." Ibsen math and science teachers, in particular, pay significant professional costs for teaching in the school.

In a number of ways, the school has organized to support academic teachers' adaptation to the collaboration norm. For one, a myth has diffused within the Ibsen community to acknowledge and pardon problems experienced and by math and science teachers and problems created by the high turnover of the faculty in these subjects. The "right-brain/ left-brain myth" was repeated by nearly every teacher we interviewed our first year in Ibsen. The theory is that mathematics and science teachers are left-brained people and therefore have trouble in the school because a) the students are right-brained, artistic types and b) left-brained people are less flexible than right-brained people. The myth effectively excuses the teachers for their "misfit" with school policies and helps to heal wounds of rift within the faculty. In some ways, it lessens normative demands of the school community

on teachers who pay the largest professional costs for teaching in Ibsen; yet it also defines them as marginal, allowing them to feel like "one-eyed step children."

More significantly, Beattrice actively supports the academic teachers' change and growth. She sees professional development as an ongoing, and often ad hoc, process and works personally with a teacher when she perceives that s/he needs help. For example, she often works with individual teachers to make an active plan with parents in order to build collaboration between the teacher, student and parent. She also arranges for teachers to share with colleagues what they find successful in the classroom. For example, at faculty meetings she arranges for teachers to share techniques that they have found to be successful in working with Ibsen students. In doing so, she empowers teachers to try new approaches to teaching and to offer help to colleagues.

Beattrice stirs the school-wide pot of collegiality at Ibsen -- and, unlike their peers in typical schools who relate mainly within departments -- the teachers regard collegiality as a "whole school" phenomenon. The special school mission and shared demands on the performing arts supports a sense of camaraderie that most teachers comment on and value. As one teacher noted: "There's more teaming here. It's the program." Teachers seem to feel that they are "working together," though differing in their views on how professionally and personally rewarding or costly are there contributions to the school's success.

Through her roll-up-sleeves approach to site administration, Beattrice communicates strong commitment to the school's collaborative enterprise over prerogatives of authority. She unambiguously models a flat hierarchy for relations between adults in the school and between adults and students. No role in the school is beneath the principal; and she devotes extraordinary time and energy to making sure that everyone is engaged in the collective enterprise. Her style and activities actively challenge a view of professional authority as a matter of hierarchy.

The transformational quality of Beattrice's leadership and the power of the school community to support teachers' professional growth and commitment to the school is illustrated most dramatically by the case of Rita Enrow (pseudonym). Three years ago we interviewed Ms. Enrow during her first year as a math teacher at Ibsen. She was so angry and frustrated over conditions of teaching in the school that she apologized to us for becoming agitated when she talked about her job. Among other comments about the school as a workplace, she said:

> They [district] just put me here. Frankly, it's hard to get teachers to come here....It's very kid-oriented and arts-oriented. It's hard on the arts teachers too. There's alot

more frustration built into this school than typical.

Regarding the norm of collaboration and her perception that the principal doesn't back up teachers' authority with students, she said: "I want to close my door and have the administration deal with problems!" Three years later, Rita Enrow pulled us aside to describe how much her feelings about the school had changed. By then she was an active member in the school community and a close, collaborative colleague of the English teacher in the adjacent room. Her comments to us about her transformation explicitly recognized the professional costs of her acclimation to Ibsen. As Rita put it: "I now appreciate what we do for students here that doesn't happen in a regular school. I now see what the trade-offs are between having a regular math department and this; the personal values and support are worth it." In three years, Rita's resistance to the school culture, particularly the collaboration norm, had transformed into advocacy and a sense of professional well-being.

Supports for Personalization

The norm of personalization is embedded in a broader set of norms which, together with school structures and routines, enforce and support teachers' commitment to this feature of Ibsen's community. The personalization norm is anchored by the principle that "everyone counts, everyone is different and special." Diversity among students is celebrated, and peer pressures to conform are discouraged by the schoolwide culture. Beattrice likes to tell of Ibsen's "resident punker," who apparently is a source of pride in a school that prides itself for individuality and diversity. She recently told the story of students rushing into her office one day to get her to stop two local police officers from arresting the kid for possession of a knife that he used to open a can for lunch; without insulting the boys sense of dignity in costume, she convinced the officers that he was harmless and a good school citizen.

Norms that govern teachers' relations with students in their classes both express and enforce the personalization norm. For example, teachers' individualized handling of a student who is failing or "misbehaving" in a class is one personalization mandate. A teacher is not supported if she or he wishes to kick a student out of class or to fail a student without a series of efforts, including parent phone calls and conferences with student and parent, referrals to the tutoring center, and consultation with other teachers of the student. Indeed, Beattrice takes an active role in facilitating this norm, which she regards as a core personal value:

> You don't realize your values and what you can't go against until you have to [do something like] run a school. One of mine is personalization. I tell teachers to try anything,

even if bizarre. Be an advocate for the kids...if they fail a test, you're the advocate. My job is to motivate the adults.

The personalization norm extends well beyond supporting each student's academic success to actively caring for kids -- taking time to get to know them as whole persons. This norm is modeled by the principal and visible administrators and supported by the "Adopt-a-Student" program for kids most at risk in the school. The principal has a number of adopted children of her own and works closely with 6 or 7 Ibsen students. Increasing numbers of teachers have taken on one or more students since the program was initiated officially in 1990; but, as Beattrice says, many more do this regularly on an informal basis. The formal structure assures that the caring adult gets a regular and timely flow of information on the student.

The school's wide grade span and the practice of assigning counselors to students by alphabet assures a continuity in the students' contact with adults in the school and thus represents other structural supports for personalization in Ibsen. Responsible and caring adults get to know the students very well over often 6 or even 9 years that they spend at the school. As the head counselor told us "this isn't a typical school. There's a humanness. It's the size." In fact, however, the school's enrollment of 1400 is comparable to that of typical high schools; and it is substantially larger than other personalized CRC schools (McLaughlin, Talbert, Kahne & Powell, 1990). However, the smaller scale at particular grade levels and the continuity of relationships among Ibsen students and adults creates important structural conditions for personalization. As many teachers have told us in describing Ibsen as a place to teach: "It's like a family." They often add that students have a very difficult time leaving when they graduate. Compared with other CRC public schools, Ibsen scores substantially higher on a survey measure of personalization and, in this respect, is similar to the private schools in our sample.

As with the norm for teacher-student collaboration, the personalization norm challenges teachers' claim to professional authority in the sense of exercising prerogatives. As a math teacher new to the school commented: "If there is ever a question of what's a priority, it's what the kids want, not the teachers -- what's 'best' for the students." Complaining that the principal sided with kids against teachers, she said: "Sometimes support isn't where it should be. I've been in places where I thought the principal would stand on your side."

The principle that everyone counts at Ibsen extends to students and teachers alike, unless their interests are seen as conflicting such as when a teacher fails a student. This is not O.K. and is strongly sanctioned by Beattrice. In this context,

what enables student success is experienced by some teachers as constraining or punishing. To support teachers' success with Ibsen's personalization norm, Beattrice has established mechanisms for students, parents, and teachers to work together to define an academic problem and to decide how to solve it. For example, she invented "failure-free" letters for teachers to use in communicating their concerns about a students' performance. She also provided 'parent effectiveness training' with the faculty to promote active listening skills and motivate teachers to keep parents well-informed. Teachers are to develop an action plan with parents which defines them as one-third responsible for their child's improvement.

Beattrice personally invests considerable energy in working with parents to make sure that they don't feel like "bad parents" when their kid has a problem -- to enable them to be a support for their kids in working through problems. She also helps them to support their children even when they are upset about a problem; she says "home is where the emotional support can happen; your kid's gonna need a hug before you deal with this problem." Parents clearly see Beattrice as a valuable resource and have asked her to come into their community to help them solve problems.

Finally, the extended roles required for personalization demand enormous time and energy of the faculty. A full-time chorus teachers once remarked that she was driven to take a "sabbatical" that year -- by which she meant limiting her job to a normal teaching load. She talked about never seeing her family the year before and getting to a point of burnout. Beattrice supported her proposal for a sabbatical, and later helped the burning-out theater production teacher to develop a sabbatical plan. He said that without the sabbatical he would be forced to leave the school on the grounds of sheer survival.

The performing arts teachers, on average, have much greater demands on their time and energy in the school, given the need to manage the performing side of the school as well as classroom teaching. Many of these teachers also maintain professional lives outside the school community -- ties with the local performing arts community that are valuable to the school for reasons of reputation and support and for placing individual students. Personal and family lives of the performing arts faculty are jeopardized by the inordinant demands of their teaching jobs at Ibsen. Ironically, the faculty in the school best positioned to enjoy intrinsic rewards of teaching at Ibsen appears to pay much greater effort and time costs than does the academic faculty.

Teachers' willingness to take on extended roles outside classroom and contract boundaries is supported by their individual commitments to students, to Ibsen, to the success of the performing arts program. A number of academic teachers and

staff spoke of "falling in love" with the school after being assigned there. Beattrice's leadership in the school and the celebrations of school mission and values go along way to engender this kind of affection for the school and its students.

Supports for Collective Problem Solving

In many ways, the problem-solving dynamic of student-adult relations at Ibsen is an outgrowth of collaboration and personalization norms more central to the school's mission. The mandate to solve problems collectively also is key to Beattrice's leadership role. She applies the principle in earnest to all relationships in the school -- those among the faculty, between faculty and staff/administration, as well as between students and teachers. One can observe the norm in faculty meetings where conflicts are aired in the interests of reaching a hard decision. Problems are defined and tackled, not avoided. Much of the energy one can observe and hear at Ibsen is generated by the belief that "if we work together we can solve whatever problems we have."

An Ibsen English teacher provides testimony of Beattrice's leadership in modeling and supporting the problem-solving norm:

> Bea has done so much to help. She's wonderful. In fact, I owe her my whole career. [In supporting faculty] She will say: 'Go with it!' If it's good for the students, she'll support it. She'll say 'we'll find a way.' That attitude and support has had a tremendous influence on me. I'm kind of like that now. I'm a better teacher and a better parent. I do the same with my students. Let's work on things together. If there's a problem, let's work on it.

This theme of the principal's support for working through professional and personal problems comes through in many of our interviews with Ibsen teachers. In contrast to most high schools in which teachers struggle privately to manage the challenges of teaching today's students, Ibsen is a problem-solving community for teachers and students alike. Among the twelve public high schools in the CRC sample, Ibsen scores highest on survey measures of innovativenss and teachers' perceived support for professional growth. The schools' collaborative culture creates a supportive learning environment for adults, as well as students, in Ibsen.

The structures that have evolved to address the needs of at-risk Ibsen students are an important complement to the problem-solving norm. Whereas teachers in the typical high school are left alone to solve problems of students' absences, academic failure and personal stresses in the context of their classrooms, Ibsen teachers have a range of supports. Other adults in their environment are committed to working with them and "problem"

students: the tutoring Center for academic support, perhaps a teacher who has 'adopted' a student, a student support group, a counselor who knows the student well, the attendance officer, and always the principal.

Norms for defining and solving faculty problem are also strong. In the context of Bêattrice's leadership, teachers cannot hide problems but can expect support in solving them. The faculty also takes responsibility for enforcing school norms and supporting colleague's efforts to change. In fact, under a district mandate that all schools "restructure" themselves, the faculty voted to establish a committee of teachers whose job it is to enforce school norms and sanction colleagues who deviate from the norms. In traditional school settings, such a structure would be avoided or defined as a radical new organization form. At Ibsen, this structural innovation expresses the faculty's commitment to school norms, on one hand, and their recognition that tensions between Ibsen and teachers' broader professional culture represent risks to the school community. The innovation satisfied the district's restructuring mandate by formalizing collegial control and problem-solving norms already operating. The organization structures which emerge and survive at Ibsen are those whose functions embody and serve the school's core values and norms.

LEADING IBSEN: TRANSFORMING TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL CULTURE

Core principles of Ibsen's special, school-wide community underlie the norms and features of school organization discussed in this paper. Chief among them are:

- educational success is a collective undertaking
- every individual counts
- problems are to be solved, not hidden.

To understand Ibsen's professional community is to see how teachers' worklives serve these core principles. To understand the challenge for leadership in the school is to see more than how Beattrice celebrates Ibsen's principles and models its special professional norms. As important among the leadership strategies that have allowed the school community to thrive are confrontations with traditional teaching culture. Some of the sacred norms of teaching conflict with Ibsen's core principles and constitute a continual threat to the school's integrity. Indeed, residues of dominant teaching culture are sources of tensions in the school -- the weeds that keep cropping up -- and need to be displaced regularly by Ms. Bronson and other leaders in the Ibsen community.

Our research in typical high schools and that of others before us isolates traditional norms for high school teaching that run counter to imperatives of Ibsen's community. They include: the norm of ranking and tracking students on the basis of their academic performance (Oakes, 1986), the norm of privacy that enforces teachers' autonomy (Little, 1987, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989), the primacy of academic over nonacademic subjects (Little, in this volume), and norms defining teachers' professional authority and responsibility in terms of their possession and transmission of subject knowledge (Powell, Farrar & Cohen, 1985; Sizer, 1984; Talbert, McLaughlin & Rowan, 1992). The ways in which Ibsen departs from these dominant norms, especially its inversion of subjects' hierarchy and limited development of high-status academic courses, prompt secondary teachers in typical district schools to regard the school as somehow illegitimate and the faculty as therefore inferior. The academic teachers pay a price for Ibsen's deviance from norms of "real school" and "real high school teachers."

As a strategy to neutralize the power of traditional norms and of outside sanctions against Ibsen teachers for their professional deviance, Ms. Bronson has developed formal policy and control mechanisms that challenge conventions of teaching. The policies officially void the authority of professional norms operating outside Ibsen and make explicit the nature of teachers' professional deviance mandated by the school community. The controls help to motivate and support teachers' struggles to reconstruct their practice -- since most Ibsen teachers learned and assimilated traditional teaching culture through their experiences as students, as student teachers, and as teachers in other schools.

One example of counter-normative school policy is the rule prohibiting student tracking practices that reproduce social inequalities. The policy allows teachers to track courses (i.e., to offer Honors and AP classes), but the classes must reflect the student composition of the school. This policy mandates equality of opportunity for minority students but, as in the performing arts world where not everyone can become a star, not equality of outcomes. Ms. Bronson enforces this policy by examining the student composition of all teachers' classes. It is up to teachers to work out entrance requirements for advanced courses and logistics of course scheduling that will achieve an equitable student mix. The counselors responsible for putting together master schedules work with teachers and the administration to implement this policy.

The principal's regular review of class data for individual teachers provides strong challenge to the norm of privacy which enforces autonomy of teachers' judgments in most teaching settings. Thus, teachers who have not "bought into" the school culture or have not yet translated its norms into teaching

practice become visible and are counselled and supported to adopt teaching practices consistent with core school values. As it happens, class records are quite useful as a window through which to detect a teacher's adherence to traditional teaching norms that compete with school norms. Beattrice scrutinizes grade records to detect the practice of curve grading which defines some students as failing, as well as to monitor the race and ethnic composition of advanced academic classes.

A further example of policy that challenges dominant professional norms concerns the definition of students' academic success as "receiving" knowledge transmitted vs. as a collective responsibility. The fail-free form that Beattrice developed and the policy that requires teachers to communicate with parents about any defined student problem insists that the teacher neither take, nor pass along to the student, the blame for learning difficulties in the classroom. This policy and its earnest enforcement by the administration and faculty challenges the powerful tendency in the broader educational culture to view education as fundamentally a matter of individual student performance, rather as a transactional and collaborative enterprise. In order for Ibsen's norm of collaboration between adults and students to operate, the dominant norms need be debilitated.

In fundamental ways, then, the mandate for leadership in the Ibsen community is as much about challenging powerful institutional forces that could undermine the school's success as enacting and enabling its special mission and core values. On one hand, Ms. Bronson invests policy and administative controls in dismantling beliefs and practices that could undermine the school's success. On the other hand, she works hard and well to tip the balance of academic teachers' professional identity and loyalty in the direction of the school community. She does this by consistently expressing the mission and core values of the school to support students' growth, by providing teachers opportunities to develop skills essential in reaching this goal, and by modeling her commitment to collaborative culture.

This case study illustrates the challenges to leadership entailed in establishing a school-wide community among high school teachers. Regardless of how much, and which particular, school values conflict with dominant professional norms, the inevitable entropy toward disciplinary communities and dominant educational standards is likely to thwart the intentions of all but leaders prepared and able to help <u>transform</u> teachers' professional identities, commitments, and practice. The many educational reform proposals which target the school as locus for change clearly underestimate the challenges posed in creating a school-wide community.

Understanding the leadership strategies effective in the

Ibsen school community allow us to see that, while "policy cannot mandate what matters" (McLaughlin, 1987), policy can mandate against constraints on what matters. Put differently: policy can challenge dominant standards for teaching which inhibit teachers' professional growth toward preferred educational values. Transformational leadership enlists formal policy to challenge constraints of teachers' professional lives, while orchestrating conditions that enable individuals to learn and succeed in a new vision.

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